DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 256 504 PS 015 118

AUTHOR Kuczynski, Leon
TITLE Development and Content of Children's Imitation in the Second and Third Years of Life.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Mental Health (DHEW), Bethesda, Md.
PUB DATE Apr 85
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (Toronto, Ontario, Canada, April 25-28, 1985). Research was also supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Age Differences; Content Analysis; *Imitation; Parents; Peer Groups; *Social Behavior; *Social Development; *Socialization; *Toddlers

ABSTRACT

In order to assess the potential role of imitation in early socialization, a study was conducted to investigate the content and development of children's imitative behavior in the home. Data consisted of incidents of immediate and deferred imitation collected over a 4- to 8-month period by mothers trained in observational recording. Subjects included 12 children who were 16 months old and 12 children who were 29 months old during the middle of the data collection period. Immediate imitations decreased with age, whereas deferred imitations increased with age. In terms of content, increases with age were found for (1) caretaking, self-care, and household task behaviors; (2) mannerisms and expressive behavior; and (3) other-directed discipline and control behaviors. Decreases with age were found for affective and miscellaneous noninstrumental behaviors. Differences in the content of children's imitations of parents and peers were also found. Findings suggested that the imitation of conventional social behaviors increases with age. (The active role of children in their own socialization is discussed.) (Author/RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED256504

Development and Content of Children's Imitation in the Second and Third Years of Life

Leon Kuczynski

Laboratory of Developmental Psychology, NIMH

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

[ ] Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Leon Kuczynski

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PS 015118

Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development in Toronto, Canada, April, 1985. This work was supported by the National Institute of Mental Health, Bethesda, Marylard and by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Research Network on the Transition from Infancy to Early Childhood.

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the content and development of children's imitative behavior in the home in order to assess the potential role of imitation in early socialization. The data consisted of incidents of immediate and deferred imitation collected over a 4 to 8 month period by mothers trained in observational recording. Twelve children were 16 months old and 12 were 29 months old during the middle of the data collection period. Immediate imitations decreased with age whereas deferred imitations increased with age. In terms of content, increases with age were found for 1) caretaking, self-care and household task behaviors; 2) mannerisms, and expressive behavior, 3) other-directed discipline and control behaviors. Decreases with age were found for affective and miscellaneous noninstrumental behaviors. Differences in the content of children's imitations of parents and peers were also found. The findings suggest that the imitation of conventional social behaviors increases with age. The active role of children in their own socialization is discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Imitation is thought to be a major process by which children come to acquire complex repertoires of socially competent behaviors. There have been many laboratory investigations of modeling and imitation with preschool and older children. However, information is lacking about the kinds of behavior relevant to socialization that children spontaneously imitate in the natural environment and about the role of imitation in children's learning in the first years of life.

The purpose of the present study was to examine the content of children's imitation in the second and third years of life in terms of categories of behavior that are meaningful from the standpoint of socialization. Both developmental and environmental processes were assumed to be relevant. In this study, age of child and the nature of the model were investigated as determinants of the content of children's imitations.

Predictions:

1) Age of Child. Following a model by Yando, Seitz & Zigler (1977), imitation is assumed to be a function of cognitive and motivational development.

   In terms of cognitive development, and the child's increasing capacity for symbolic representation, it was predicted that deferred imitations would increase with age.

   In terms of motivational development, it was predicted that there would be an increasing selectivity with age in the content of children's imitations. Namely, in the second year of life the conventional social meaning of the behavior would increasingly determine the behaviors that children imitate after infancy (Killen & Uzgiris, 1981) and with age, children increasingly focus on competent features of the model's behavior (Kohlberg, 1969).

2) Parent vs. Peer Models. It was assumed that the typical roles and routines of parents and peers provide children with different models of behavior. Since parents more frequently engage in conventionally competent social and instrumental behaviors than peers, more imitations of parents would be of competent behaviors.

METHOD

The data consisted of narrative descriptions of 1,459 incidents of imitation collected over a 4-8 month period of time by mothers trained in observational recording. Twelve children were 16 months old and 12 were 29 months old during the middle of their data collection periods. The data were coded in terms of the identity of the model (parent, peer, others), timing of the imitation (immediate vs. deferred) and content categories consisting of affective behaviors, expressive behaviors, conventional social and instrumental behaviors and miscellaneous behaviors that did not have an apparent conventional social or instrumental meaning. The data were analyzed with MANOVAS and ANOVAS in terms of age of child and the nature of the model.

RESULTS

I. Age Changes in Timing and Content of Imitation (Table 2)

1. The proportion of deferred imitations increased and of immediate imitations decreased with age.

2. Imitations of miscellaneous noninstrumental behaviors decreased with age.

3. Overall, imitations of affective behaviors decreased with age. However, internal analyses indicated that imitations of affect with a "faked" or deliberately contrived quality increased with age.

4. Imitations of household task/caretaking/self-care behaviors and imitations of mannerisms/expressive behaviors increased with age.

5. Overall, there were no age changes in imitations of discipline/control behaviors. However, internal analyses indicated that there was an increase with age in the extent to which children's imitations of discipline were functionally directed to other person's, animals or dolls.

II. Content of Imitations of Parent and Peer Models (Table 3)

1. A greater proportion of imitations of parents than of peers were deferred imitations.

2. More imitations of parents consisted of household task/caretaking/self-care behaviors and of discipline/control behaviors.

3. More imitations of peers consisted of affective expressions, fantasy behaviors and of miscellaneous noninstrumental behaviors.

Table 1
Imitation Content Categories and Examples

Affective Behaviors	-unelaborated	laughed; clapped and cheered; cried; screamed in pain; shouted copying angry tone choked; sneezed; snored; yawned; sighed.
	-contrived	pretended to cry; faked a laugh; imitated crying then laughed; pushed bike over fell down and cried imitating accident of sibling; coughed and wanted medicine after sibling got cough medicine; said he was hurt too after sibling hurt arm.
Affection		kissed; puckered lips; rocked; hugged; cuddled
Task/caretaking/self-care		fed, diapered, potty trained, nursed doll or sibling; dried dog; washed windows; vacuumed floor; helped with gardening; pretended to cook; put on shoes; brushed teeth; tried to cut food with knife
Discipline/control	-undirected	repeated "No!" in same tone of voice; repeated "Oh Laurie, mess!"; slapped own hand repeats "knock it off!"
	-other-directed	yelled at and hit dog; pointed to father and said "Sit,Sit !"; scolds sibling after mother does; hit doll for wetting; slaps sister's hand imitating mother; calls siblings into house
Social interaction behaviors		waved "bye bye"; said "sorry"; grabbed toy; pushed in line, called mother "Honey"
Mannerisms/expressive behaviors		flaunted in front of mirror; flipped hair back with finger like father; copied tone of voice and facial expression; bit nails, crossed legs, strutted with hands on hips like mother; put coat on, kissed mother and tried to leave like father; lay on couch reading with feet
Fantasy behaviors		made siren noise; pretended chairs were trains; pretended she was a cat, fireman, singer, Batman, Indian
Miscellaneous verbalizations		"hot", "hat", "fun", "Birthday", "dammit", "turtle", "milk", "Dad", "happy"
Miscellaneous behaviors		pounded on table; pointed; splashed; jumped; ducked face in pool; clapped; dragged blanket; shook head; put hands over ears; stuck out tongue; made singing noises

Table 2
Content† and Timing of Imitations of 16 Month and 29 Month old Children

Content	16 Month Old	29 Month Old
Affective Behaviors	.48	.34 **
Affection	.06	.04
Tasks/Caretaking/Self-Care Behaviors	.09	.19 **
Discipline/Control Behaviors	.09	.10
Social Interaction Behaviors	.01	.03 *
Mannerisms/Expressive Behaviors	.01	.06 ***
Fantasy Behaviors	.02	.04 *
Miscellaneous Verbalizations	.05	.09 *
Miscellaneous Behaviors	.17	.09 ***
Timing		
Deferred Imitations	.09	.20 **

†Expressed as proportion of total imitations.

*$p < .10$; **$p < .05$; ***$p < .01$

Table 3
Content† and Timing of Imitations of Parent and Peer Models

	Model	
Content	Parents	Peers
Affective Behaviors	.33	.54 **
Affection	.06	.06
Task/Caretaking/Self-Care Behaviors	.19	.03 **
Discipline/Control Behaviors	.16	.03 **
Social Interaction Behaviors	.02	.02
Mannerisms/Expressive Behaviors	.04	.01 *
Fantasy Behaviors	.01	.03 *
Miscellaneous Verbalizations	.07	.04
Miscellaneous Behaviors	.07	.21 **
Timing		
Deferred Imitations	.18	.06 **

†Expressed as proportion of total imitations for each model.

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$